

# The “Agora”: can cross-border cooperation programmes and projects bring added trust and stability to their regions

EU Neighbours in action: Knowledge across borders | 19-20 May 2026

## Overview

To conclude Day 1 of the event, participants were invited to discuss how cross-border cooperation programmes and projects can bring added trust and stability to their regions.

Against a context of increased tensions among populations - behind and across national borders - intensified by geopolitical events and socio-economic challenges, the purpose of the session was:

- To highlight the role played by cross-border programmes and projects in supporting trust and stability;
- To consider how cross-border programmes and projects can continue to build trust and stability.

## Methodology

The session utilised an “Agora” methodology, based around the presentation of concrete examples which were discussed in small groups.

## Key discussion points

The concrete examples discussed were the following:

- Oana Cristea – Romania-Serbia - “Safer climate within the Romanian-Serbian border area”
- Cezar Grozavu – Romania-Ukraine - “BRIDGE- Improvement of the population safety and security level in the cross-border area by enhancing the joint training and cooperation actions in emergency management”
- Davide Marciano – South Adriatic - “Project SA-RESILIENCE”
- Nersada Mandija – Montenegro-Albania - “Skadar/Shkodër Lake Watershed – a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve”
- Declan McGarrigle – PEACEPLUS – Investment Area 4.1 “Collaborative Health & Social Care”; Investment Area 1.4 “Re-imaging Communities”; and the “Change Makers” small project fund.

## Main takeaways

Based on the examples above and participants’ own experience, participants were asked to reflect on the following questions:

How has cooperation built trust and stability?	How can cooperation continue to build trust and stability?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identification of shared challenges</li> <li>- Enabling structured dialogue</li> <li>- Connecting people (human aspect)</li> <li>- Builds individual and collective commitment</li> <li>- Enables long terms partnerships, between communities and institutions</li> <li>- Reestablishes communication which may have become blocked</li> <li>- Fostering and common identity</li> <li>- Delivering tangible everyday benefits which build public confidence</li> <li>- Providing visible symbols of cooperation (e.g. public infrastructure)</li> <li>- Opening people's eyes to how similar they are</li> <li>- Bringing together experienced and inexperienced partners</li> </ul>	<p>Continuing all the above, plus...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focusing on small-scale projects</li> <li>- Embedding strategies</li> <li>- Building on successful models</li> <li>- Strategic cooperation between state institutions</li> <li>- Introducing good practices from Interreg to IPA-IPA</li> <li>- Ensuring multilevel approaches and governance</li> <li>- Being responsive and adaptive to changing political and socio-economic contexts</li> </ul> <p>Lastly, it was noted that trust and stability takes time: it comes from repetition of funding, long term programming, visibility of benefits</p>

### Follow-up actions / next steps

Interact will reflect on the session outcomes and consider what further tools or events can be provided on this topic.

### Session team

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